

Seniorgram: Sending a Message on Senior Issues

June is LGBT Pride Month - and community efforts to show pride all year around

By **Barbara Bodzin, Executive Director, LifePath**

Nearly 50 years ago, at the end of June, 1969, in what came to be known as the Stonewall riots, a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning individuals joined together to riot in protest of a police raid of the Stonewall Inn.

At that time in our nation's history, LGBTIQA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, aromantic, asexual, agender, and allied) persons faced a starkly repressive culture and justice system. The stories of the struggles people endured may come as a surprise to younger generations of LGBTIQA people, whose own unique challenges today may make an impression on those who were young themselves in 1969.

Bringing together the stories of many generations of this important group of people is part of the work of the Rainbow Elders of LifePath.

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Rainbow Elders offers opportunities for LGBTIQA elders, as well as their allies, to build connections and find resources. The group helps people build relationships, give and gain support, grow in knowledge and cultural competence, and advocate for human rights so that everyone can live and age with dignity.

Each year in the spring, Rainbow Elders partners with area nonprofits and business supporters to host an intergenerational gathering of LGBTIQA people of all ages. Over dinner, guests mingle and get to know one another over ice-breakers and deeper conversations about what it means to be LGBTIQA today, what it meant yesterday, and what the future could hold.

Rainbow Elders also hosts other annual social and educational events. The

next picnic takes place in July, and an educational presentation will be offered in the fall. A team of elder panelists is available to speak with community groups, and Rainbow Elders also offers information, referral, and opportunities for advocacy.

Several other organizations exist here in Western Mass to support LGBTIQA people. You can meet many of them at the upcoming Franklin County Pride event on June 23, right here in Greenfield.

Here is a partial selection of local offerings, as featured in the Rainbow Elder's quarterly newsletter, available by free subscription to your email inbox (sign up online at LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders):

- Pioneer Valley OLOC (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change): Meets twice monthly in Northampton; films are open to all ages; visit oloc.org
- Gender-Role Free Contra Dances for the LGBTIQA Community & Friends: Seasonal; meets in Montague; visit www.lcfid.org/westma
- Rainbow Supper Club: Meets for dinner on the first Wednesday of each month in Holyoke; contact WestMass ElderCare: 413-538-9020 or rainbowsupperclub@wmeldercare.org
- Transforming Parents: A support group for parents of transgender, gender non-conforming or questioning children, teenagers, and adults; meets monthly in Northampton; contact transformingparents@gmail.com
- G Cha Cha: A Queer Latin Dance Night: "for the dance-serious and the dance-curious"; meets the second Thursday of every month from 7 to 10 p.m. at The Boylston Room East at Keystone Mill in Easthampton.
- Journey: A social and support group for people of all ages who identify as trans women, trans men, and non-binary individuals and their friends, family, and partners; meets monthly in Northampton; contact journeynorthampton@gmail.com
- Rainbow Seniors: offers a "Talk & Listen Group" for confidential conversation and monthly "fun" meetings in Pittsfield, Mass.; visit rainbowseniors.org
- Franklin Hampshire PFLAG (Parents, Family, Friends and Allies United with LGBTQ people): reach Jane at 413-625-6636 or fhcpflag@gmail.com or find events on Facebook

LifePath's many services for elders, people with disabilities, and caregivers are open to and affirming of people of all identities. If you need a helping and welcoming hand, please don't hesitate to reach out for support. Find us online at LifePathMA.org and a phone call away at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259.

The rainbow! Understanding diverse expressions of gender, sexuality, and relationships



The Rainbow Elders Steering Committee: Leea Pronovost, Dave Gott, Donna Liebl, and JR.

By **Dave Gott, Rainbow Elders Steering Committee**

Since May 2016, a panel of Rainbow Elders has shared life stories and educational tools with audiences at senior centers, home care agencies, retirement communities, and support group settings. A one-hour presentation

is followed by a lively question-and-answer period during which listeners have an opportunity to learn more about the experiences of the speakers and to relate what has been presented to their professional and personal interests.

The identities of transgender, bisexual, lesbian, and gay are addressed by individuals who live those lives. Additional identities are also noted, including pansexual, intersex, queer, questioning, asexual, aromantic, agender, and allies. Any question is welcomed and will be addressed if appropriate to do so. A climate of safety and respect is encouraged, and follow-up resources are provided.

A goal of these presentations is to help empower people to be able to offer culturally competent services to the LGBTIQA elder community, whose members are often at increased risk for inadequate access to health care services, social isolation, substance abuse, and other high-risk experiences due to societal and internalized expressions of homophobia. An opportunity is also provided to be inspired by the resilience of many LGBTIQA folks who have long been misunderstood.

Recent questions directed to the panelists have include:

- "What do I do when a client is expressing negative stereotypes regarding an LGBTIQA person?"
- "Why does it matter if I show LGBTIQA-specific support when I am just in the home to help someone take a bath or balance a checkbook?"

The conversations that ensue are not to be missed!

For more information or to request a presentation, contact Dave Gott at 413-773-5555 x1242, 978-544-2259 x1242, or dgott@lifepathma.org.

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Legal Notes Planning for a funeral

By Attorney Seunghee Cha, Bulkley, Richardson and Gelinis, LLP, Amherst, MA, 413-256-0002

Funeral planning eases the burden on loved ones of making arrangements in a time of grief. This article provides guidance on options and some basics you should know.

Funeral trust: You can purchase a “pre-need” funeral contract from a funeral establishment, which must deposit the payment in a trust account of a Massachusetts bank. A trustee manages the account and upon your death the funds pay for goods and services included in the contract, such as basic services for arranging logistics, cremation/embalming, and burial.

Funeral Life Insurance Policy or Annuity: Some funeral establishments offer life insurance and annuities specifically to pay for pre-need funeral contracts. Anyone selling such products must comply with all state and federal laws and regulations governing the insurance industry, including licensing requirements.

Bank account: You can open a separate account to defray the cost of funeral expenses. The account is in your name and is labeled as a “burial” account.

Veterans: Massachusetts Veterans’ Memorial Cemeteries are located in Agawam and Winchendon. No fee is charged for the funeral of an eligible veteran, and a nominal fee is charged for spouses, widows and widowers, and qualified dependents.

Organ donation: You must obtain a donor card from the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Only you can register to become a donor — someone else cannot do it for you.

Green burial: With a national conversation growing about “good death,” so is interest in environmentally conscious, green burials. Communities in our area where green burials are allowed include Chesterfield, Conway, Shutesbury, Wendell, Amherst, and Westfield. Local town/city clerks issue permits and provide guidelines for documenting the death and lawful possession, proper handling, and transport of the body.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

- Cancel a pre-need funeral contract, including the type funded with life insurance or annuity, within 10 days of signing without penalty;
- Receive a written price list of goods and services offered;
- Receive price information on the telephone (without disclosing your name and contact information);

- Buy goods and services separately: you need not buy a package;
- Use an alternative casket or urn for cremation without paying an extra fee.

SHOP AROUND, ASK QUESTIONS, GET IT IN WRITING.

- What happens if the funeral establishment goes out of business?
- What happens if you move or die while away from home?
- Itemized list of goods and services;
- Cancellation policy, commissions, and fees.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Make funeral instructions easily accessible by family after your death.
- Joint ownership of burial accounts permits ready access by the survivor.
- Organ donors should make an alternative plan in case the body cannot be accepted.

“With a national conversation growing about “good death,” so is interest in environmentally conscious, green burials. Communities in our area where green burials are allowed include Chesterfield, Conway, Shutesbury, Wendell, Amherst, and Westfield.”

The views expressed in this column represent general information. To address your particular and specific needs consult your own attorney. If you need help with referral to an attorney, contact the Franklin County Bar Association at (413) 773-9839 or the Worcester County Bar Association at (978) 752-1311. Elder law resources may be found through the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, Massachusetts Chapter, at massnaela.com or 617-566-5640.

Community Legal Aid (CLA) provides legal services free to people age 60 and older for civil legal matters with an emphasis on access to health care coverage (MassHealth and Medicare) and public benefits as well as tenants’ rights. A request for legal assistance can be made by phone at 413-774-3747 or toll-free 1-855-252-5342 during their intake hours (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and Wednesday from 1:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.) or any time online by visiting www.communitylegal.org.

Free workshop to offer support and strategies for hope and independence

Bec Belofsky Shuer and Lee Shuer, from Easthampton, will facilitate a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) group to support you as you develop strategies for making the most of every day, even when things are tough! This free workshop will meet at LifePath (101 Munson Street in Greenfield), from 1 to 3 p.m., twice weekly for three weeks on Thursdays and Fridays: June 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, and 29, 2018.

Space is limited, so please register now. Call 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or email info@lifepathma.org.

WRAP is about finding and keeping hope and independence in our lives. Each week we will discuss practical skills and action plans to deal with life’s ups and downs. We will meet six times, for two hours. You will be provided with a personal WRAP workbook - it’s yours to keep!

Bec and Lee love running these groups and hope you will join them. Their group at the Longmeadow Adult Center was a hit, thoroughly enjoyed by attendees and facilitators alike!

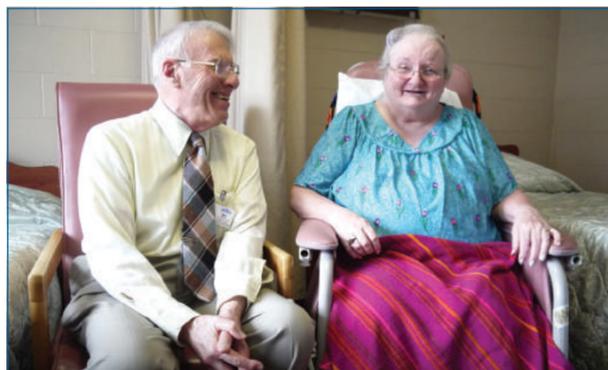
Learn more about LifePath’s many programs that support the wellbeing and independence of elders, people with disabilities, and their caregivers online at LifePathMA.org.

This workshop series is sponsored by LifePath with support from the Massachusetts Council on Aging, under a service incentive grant from Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.



Priority registration will be given to those who are age 60 and over, but others are encouraged to register.

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“We all need interconnection.”
 - LifePath volunteer

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